



2003 SENIOR CITIZEN REPORT

Information of
Interest to Seniors



Representative
SKIP
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Committees:

- Higher Education, *Assistant Ranking Republican*;
- Capital Budget, *Assistant Ranking Republican*;
- Trade and Economic Development

Dear Friends and Neighbors

I'm sending you this newsletter to relay what I believe will be useful information for our communities' seniors. The issues covered here have big impacts on your pocketbook and quality of life. I hope the information results in some immediate financial relief for you, or provides new resources to assist you.

Lawmakers made a small step in the right direction by passing prescription drug legislation this year designed to save the state money when it purchases medications for people who rely on government funded health coverage. Because the new law will take some time to go into effect and may not provide immediate benefits to all, I offer some alternatives in this newsletter that may well save you money on your prescription drugs right now.

We're reminded of paying property taxes this time of year. We're also mindful of the burden placed on many seniors, especially those on fixed incomes. I know it presents a serious problem when homeowners' taxes rise faster than their income. For this reason, I hope the next legislative session — which begins Jan. 12th — will bring the opportunity to vote on new legislation that would further ease the property tax burden for seniors.

The good news now is that the Legislature has adopted tax breaks for seniors in the past. If you qualify and are not already taking advantage of this tax relief, read on as I've provided detailed information that may help you.

The quality of life in our communities is often dependent upon knowing who to call for help. Please refer to the government and services guide of useful phone numbers included in this newsletter.

The important thing to remember is assistance is available. We have the opportunity to improve our lives and our communities for the better. As your state representative, elected to serve you, I'm committed to helping make government more accessible and accountable to you. It's important that you know about and can take advantage of our community's resources.

As always, I welcome your questions and concerns regarding legislative issues and questions and concerns of particular importance to you. Please contact me at the phone number and email listed on this page if I can help.

Sincerely,

Skip Priest • State Representative
30th Legislative District

ARE YOU GETTING THE PROPERTY TAX BREAKS YOU DESERVE?

As your state representative, I continually strive to make the taxes we all pay work harder. Fiscal responsibility is first and foremost in my mind as I introduce legislation and vote on bills. I'm pleased we succeeded in balancing our state budget without raising new general fund taxes.

But I'm always concerned when I hear from my constituents that their property taxes are so high they can't afford to stay in their homes. Or, their taxes are eating up a far too large portion of their fixed incomes. I hope the following information provides information you can use right now to ease your tax burden. Did you know you may qualify for property tax exemptions if you meet all of the following criteria?

- You are at least 61 years of age or disabled.
- You own and live in a single-family home, mobile home, or condominium.
- You have a combined household income not exceeding \$30,000.

Expenses for some nursing or home health care and some medications may be deducted when calculating your income. You also can remain eligible for tax breaks if your home is rented while you're in the hospital or nursing home.

Valuation limit for qualified seniors

Qualifying citizens are entitled to property tax exemptions on their principal residence and up to one acre of land. The value of the residence is frozen at its value on Jan. 1 of the year in which you first qualify for the program.

Exemption schedule

You are eligible for the following exemptions if your combined household income falls within the range indicated.

Income

\$24,001 to \$30,000

\$18,001 to \$24,000

\$18,000 or less

Exemption

All excess levies (*special school levies are an example of excess levies*).

All excess levies and regular levies on the greater of \$40,000 or 35% of assessed valuation (*\$60,000 max.*).

All excess levies and regular levies on the greater of \$50,000 or 60% of assessed valuation.

PROPERTY TAX DEFERRALS

If you are 60 years of age or retired because of physical disability, and your disposable income is \$34,000 or less, you may qualify for property tax deferrals. The state allows property tax deferrals on up to 80 percent of the equity in your home. The deferral program applies to your principal residence and up to five acres, if zoning requires a larger parcel size.

Under this program, you pay no property tax until the home is sold. The state pays the deferred taxes, and in exchange, receives a lien against the property equal to the amount of owed taxes plus 8 percent. Total taxes are collected when the property is sold or passed on.



HOW TO APPLY FOR PROPERTY TAX BREAKS

For more information on both property tax exemptions and deferrals, call your county assessor:

Pierce County Assessor 253-798-6111

King County Assessor 206-296-7300

Or you can obtain more information about our state's property tax laws by calling the Washington State Department of Revenue toll-free at 1-800-647-7706.

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PRESCRIPTION DRUG PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS

While we passed a law this year that is designed to save the state money when it purchases medications for people who rely on government funded health coverage, it's not the end of what we can and should do to create true senior prescription drug assistance that would do more to help seniors get the medicine they need but can't afford.

Senate Bill 6088 should help control state expenditures on prescription drugs and may also give some consumers access to lower cost medications. The new law creates an information clearinghouse for prescription drug assistance programs as well as prescription drug education programs aimed at helping seniors save money. The state will also seek federal authority to operate a prescription drug assistance program for seniors and attempt to negotiate prescription discounts for some seniors and the disabled.

While we wait for the benefits of our new state law to take affect and for the federal government to create a federal prescription drug benefit through Medicare, there is more we can do on this front. I want to provide what might be useful resources and advice right now. Please consider the programs listed below.

- **GlaxoSmithKline – Orange Card**
Phone: 1-888-ORANGE6 (888-672-6436)
- **Novartis – CareCard**
Phone: 1-866-974-CARE (866-974-2273)
- **Pfizer – Share Card**
Phone: 1-800-717-6005
- **Lilly – LillyAnswers Card**
Phone: 1-877-RX-LILLY (887-795-4559)
- **Together Rx (Abbott Laboratories, AstraZeneca, Aventis, Bristol-Myers Squibb, GlaxoSmithKline, Johnson & Johnson and Novartis.)**
Phone: 1-800-865-7211



Programs do exist now that could be of help to you while we continue working on legislative solutions for the dilemma that exists for many because of the high price of prescription drugs.

GOVERNMENT AND SERVICES GUIDE:

A Directory of Local and State Resource Numbers

State Elected Officials

Governor Gary Locke (360) 902-4111
Lt. Governor Brad Owen (360) 786-7700
Secretary of State Sam Reed (360) 902-4151
Treasurer Michael Murphy (360) 902-9000
Auditor Brian Sonntag (360) 902-0370
Attorney General Christine Gregoire (360) 753-6200
Superintendent of Public Instruction Terry Bergeson
..... (360) 725-6000
Commissioner of Public Lands Doug Sutherland
..... (360) 902-1000
Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler (360) 753-7300

King County

General Information 1-800-325-6165
County Council (206) 296-1000
Assessor Scott Noble (206) 296-7300
Auditor Cheryle Broom (206) 296-1655
County Executive Ron Sims (206) 296-4040
Prosecuting Attorney Norm Maleng (206) 296-9000
Sheriff Dave Reichert (206) 296-4155
County Records & Licensing (206) 296-8683
Elections Department (206) 296-1565

Pierce County

General Information ... (253) 798-3200 or 1-800-992-3200
Council (253) 798-7777
Assessor-Treasurer Ken Madsen (253) 798-6111
Auditor Pat McCarthy (253) 798-3188
County Executive John Ladenburg (253) 798-7477
Prosecuting Attorney Gerald Horne (253) 798-7792
Sheriff Paul Pastor (253) 296-4155
Vehicle Licensing (Main Line) (253) 798-7547
Elections Department (253) 798-7430

Toll-Free Information Hotline Phone Numbers

Legislative Hotline (*Language interpretive services available upon request*) 1-800-562-6000
Legislative Hotline (hearing impaired citizens)
TTY-TDD 1-800-635-9993

Directory of Local and State Resource Numbers (cont'd from pg. 3)

State Agency Information	1-800-321-2808
Aging and Adult Services	1-800-422-3263
AIDS/HIV Information	1-800-272-2437
Attorney General Consumer Protection	1-800-551-4636
Basic Health Plan	1-800-826-2444
Children or Families at Risk	1-800-562-5624
Children's Support Enforcement	1-800-729-7580
Crime Victims Advocacy	1-800-822-1067
Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-562-6025
Crisis Line	1-800-827-8840
Family and Children's Ombudsman ..	1-800-571-7321
Ferry Information	1-888-808-7977
Insurance Commissioner - Consumer Protection	1-800-562-6900
Long-Term Care Ombudsman	1-800-562-6028
Medicaid Information	1-800-562-3022
Missing Children Clearinghouse	1-800-543-5678
Natural Resources (Wood cutting and fire permits)	1-800-527-3305
Pass Reports	1-800-695-7623
Revenue, Dept. of	1-800-647-7706
Veterans Affairs	1-800-562-2308
Voter Information	1-800-448-4881
Welfare Fraud	1-800-562-6906

I'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you have questions or ideas about issues being addressed by the Legislature, I'd like to hear from you. We are scheduled to go back to Olympia for the 2004 legislative session Jan. 12. It's important for me to continue to hear the concerns of our district. I appreciate you contacting me. Please provide the information below. You may also contact me directly via e-mail at priest_sk@leg.wa.gov.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ and/or

E-Mail: _____

Comments: _____

Please fill out and return to:

Rep. Skip Priest, P.O. Box 40600, Olympia, WA 98504-0600

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